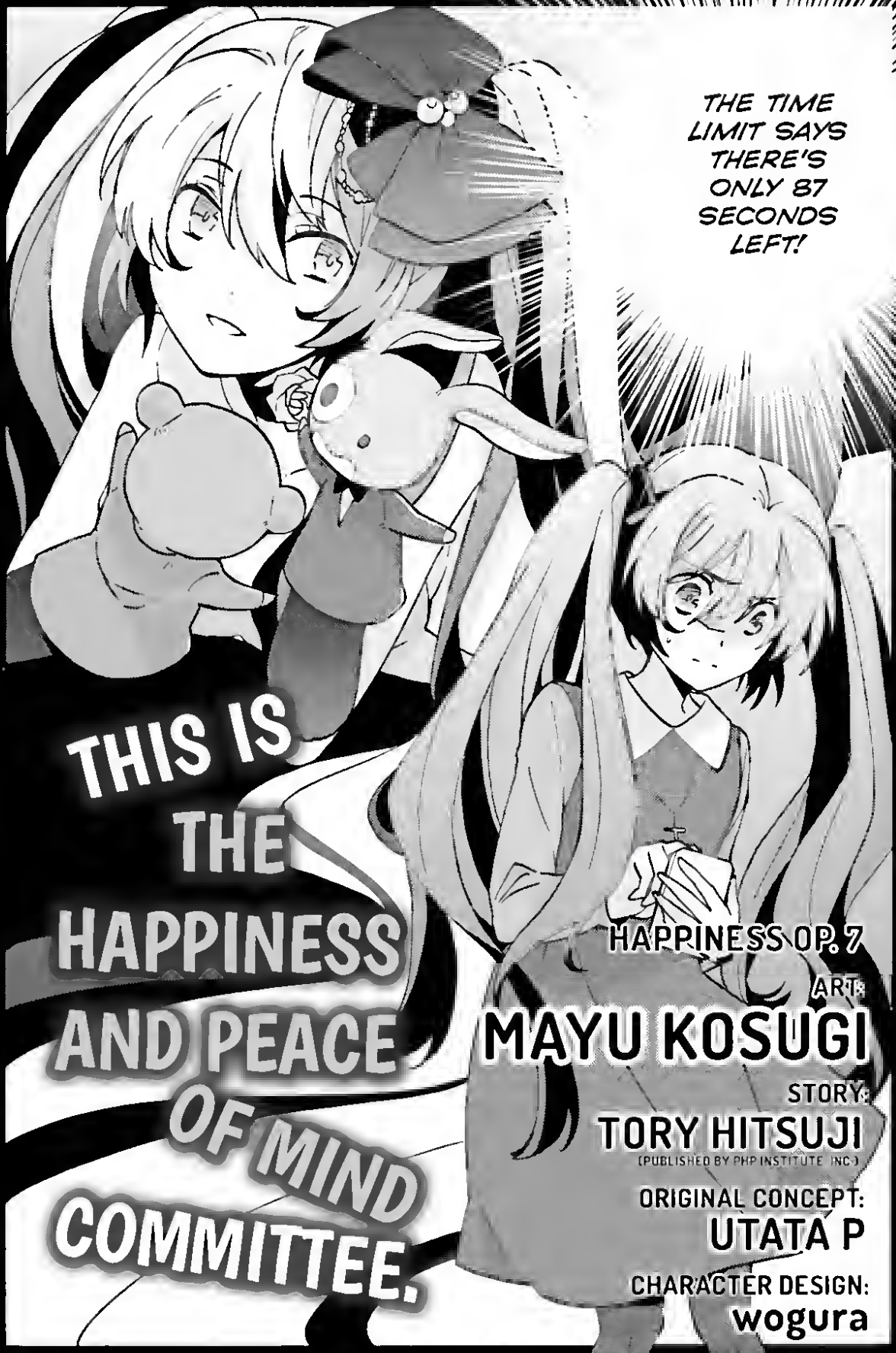
I FELL INTO A TRAP.
IF I TAKE MY HAND OFF...
...ANOTHER TRAP WILL PROBABLY SPRING.
95
SEARCH...
...DEMOSTHENES FOR ME.


LEN IS CAUGHT IN A TRAP! THE TIME TO FREE HIM IS RUNNING SHORT!
THE TIME LIMIT SAYS THERE'S ONLY 87 SECONDS LEFT!
THIS IS THE HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND COMMITTEE.
HAPPINESS OP. 7
ART:
MAYU KOSUGI
STORY:
TORY HITSUJI
(PUBLISHED BY PHP INSTITUTE, INC.)
ORIGINAL CONCEPT:
UTATA P
CHARACTER DESIGN:
wogura

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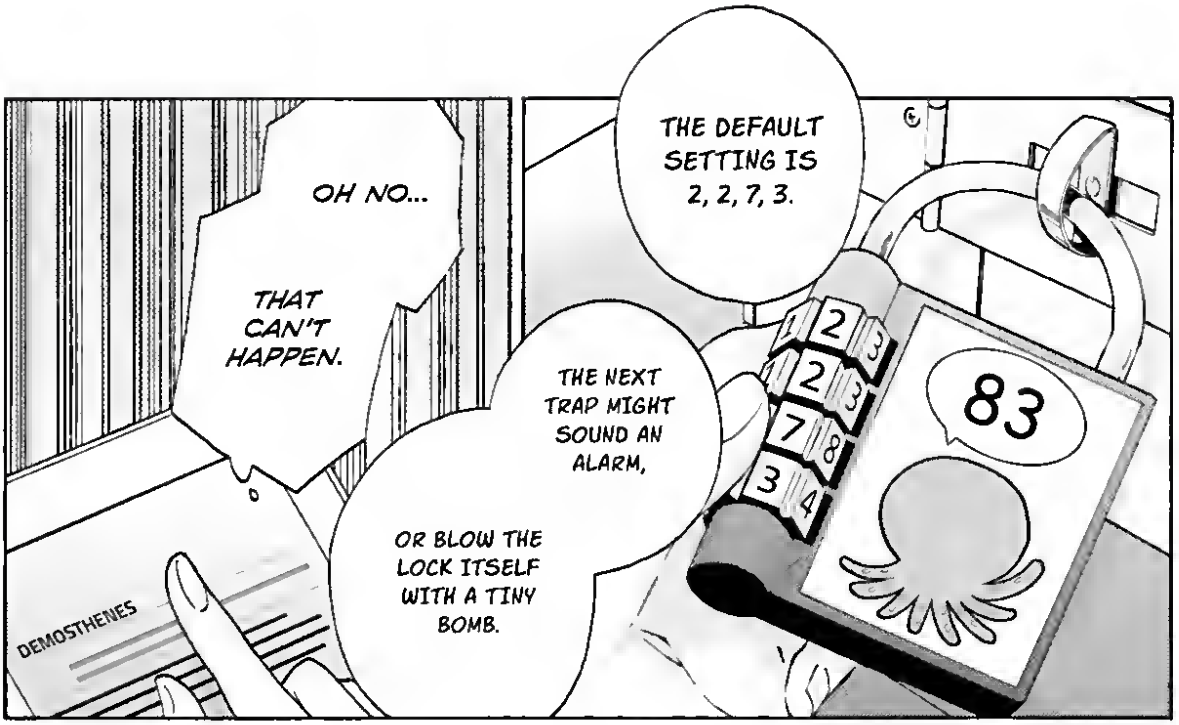
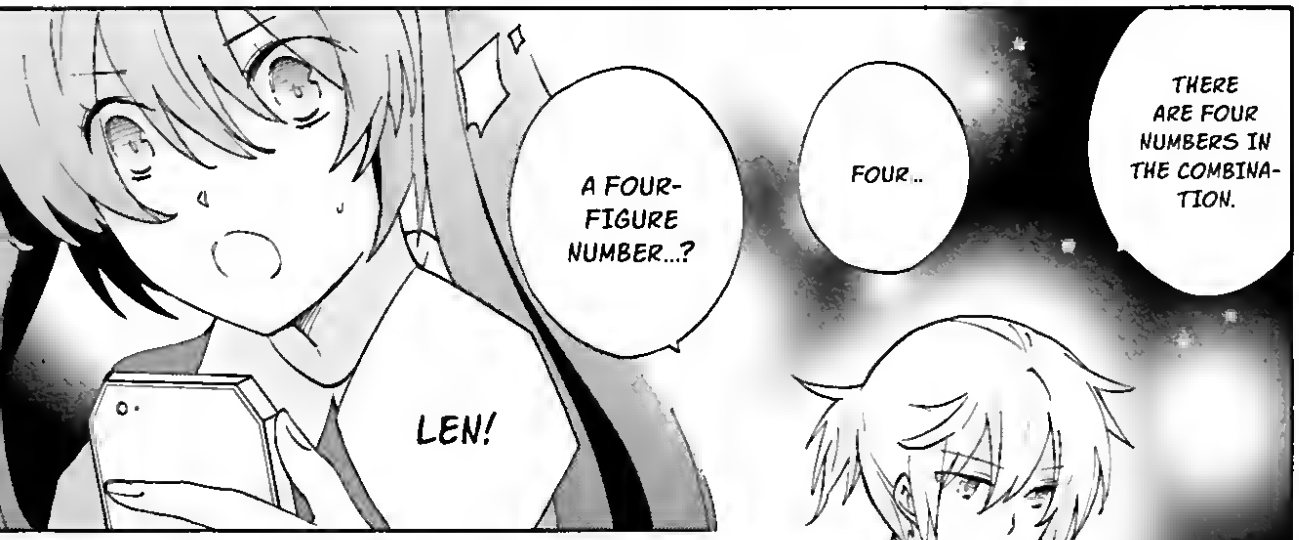

OH NO...
THAT CAN'T HAPPEN.
DEMOSTHENES
THE NEXT TRAP MIGHT SOUND AN ALARM,
OR BLOW THE LOCK ITSELF WITH A TINY BOMB.
THE DEFAULT SETTING IS 2, 2, 7, 3.
1 2 3
2 3
7 8
3 4
83


LEN!
A FOUR-FIGURE NUMBER...?
FOUR..
THERE ARE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE COMBINATION.

DEMOSTHENES
A FOUR-FIGURE NUMBER...
..MAYBE IT'S HIS BIRTHDAY OR SOMETHING?

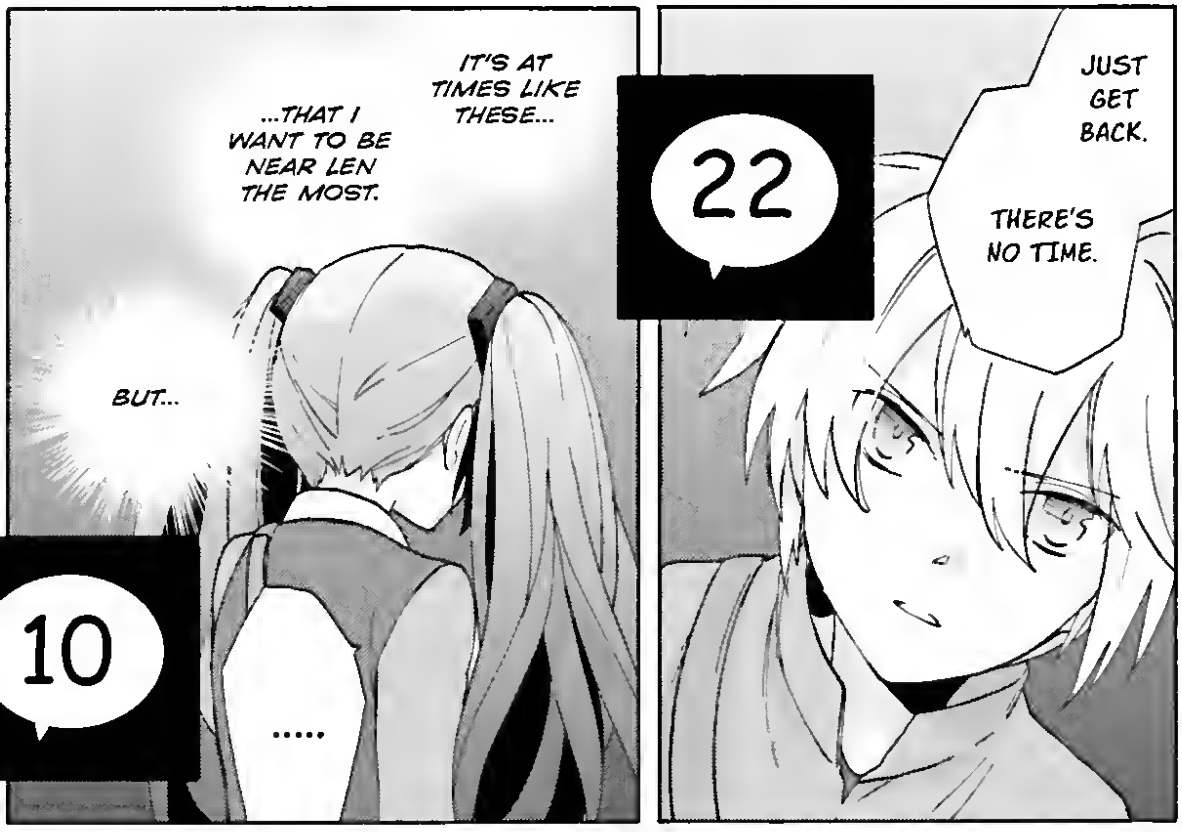
BIRTHDAY..
BUT DEM-OSTHENES WAS FROM ANCIENT GREECE.
IN OTHER WORDS, HE WAS BORN IN B.C.E.
HOW WOULD WE PUT IN THE NEGATIVE?
THERE'S NO NEGATIVE SYMBOL ON A COMBINATION LOCK
THOUGH...
..IT REALLY COULD BE HIS BIRTHDAY.
57

HATSUNE
WHEN WAS HE BORN?
IT SAYS...
"AROUND 384 B.C.E."
WAIT, AROUND ?!
41

31
THAT'S PROBABLY RIGHT.
YEAH. THAT'S IT.

BU-
BUT WHAT IF IT'S WRONG?!
THERE'S A 90% LIKELIHOOD OF IT WORKING.
BUT YOU SHOULD GET BACK JUST IN CASE THERE IS AN EXPLOSION.
WITH A LOCK THIS SMALL...
IT'D PROBABLY BLOW MY FINGERS OFF.
OH NO...
BUT...

I'M DOING IT!
!!
ぴく
Twitch


22
JUST GET BACK.
THERE'S NO TIME.
10
BUT...
.....
...THAT I WANT TO BE NEAR LEN THE MOST.
IT'S AT TIMES LIKE THESE...

OKAY!
...I DEFINITELY DON'T WANT TO HOLD HIM BACK!
5
384...
B.C.E.
4

3
2

LEN!!

PWINK!
1
3
3
8
4
WHIRL
WHIRL
WHIRL
SHK
tnk
.....
WOBBLE

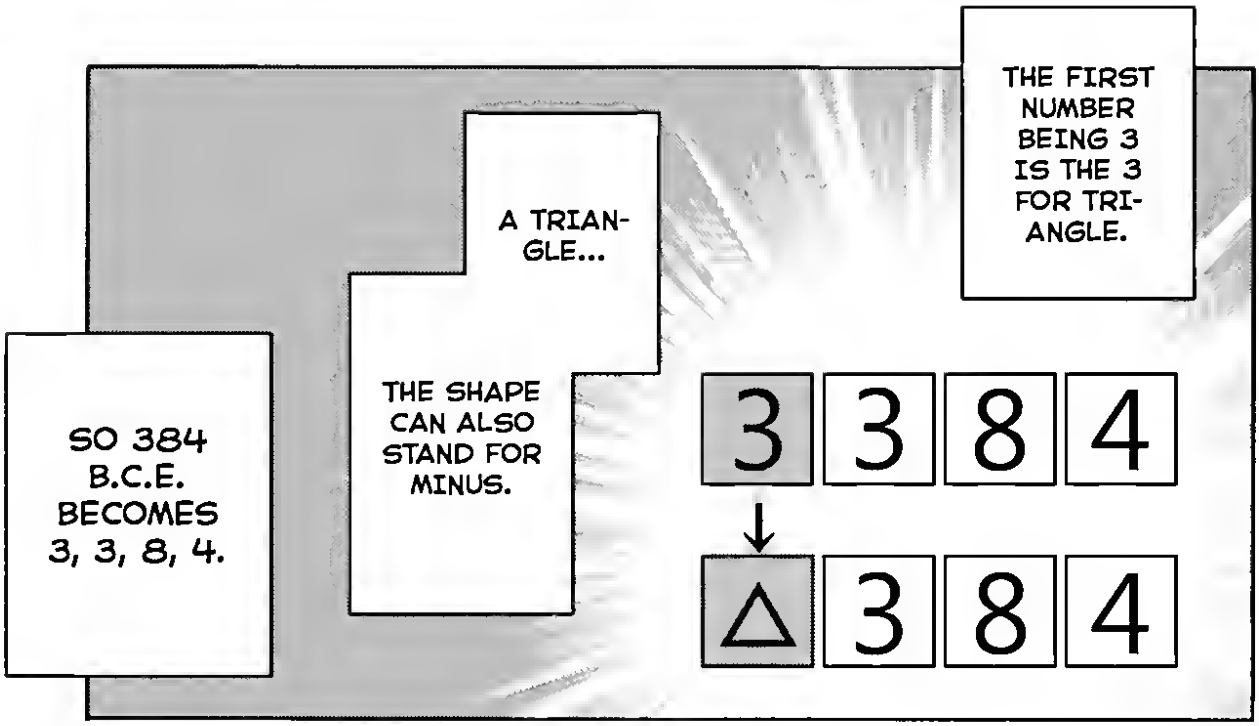
SHF
OH...
I'M SO GLAD...
ほっ... PHEW
THE SCREW-DRIVER HE BORROWED FROM KAI.
OH...
THAT'S...

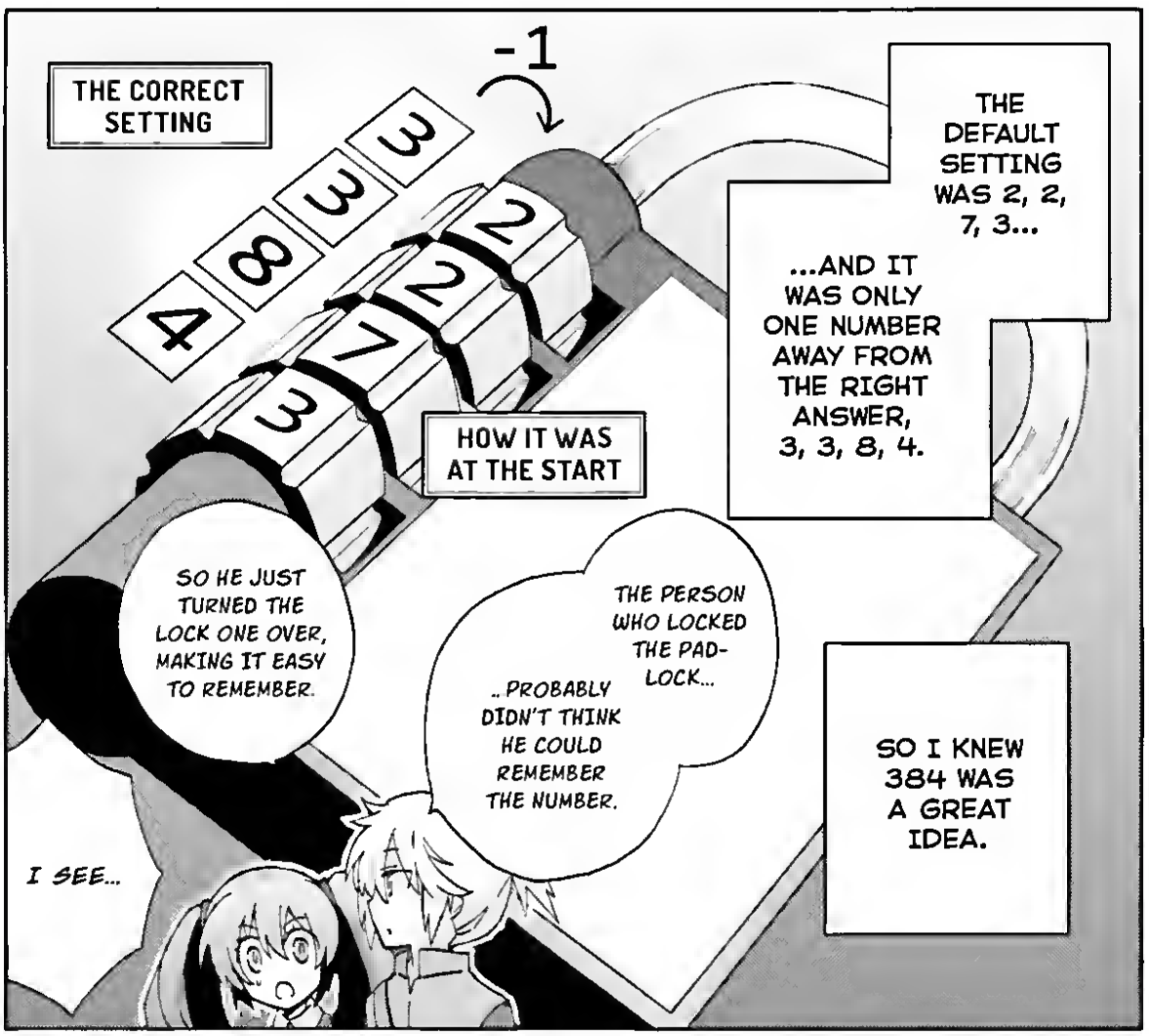
Twist
UH...
UM...
IS IT OKAY IF I COME BACK NOW?
YEAH.
KACHK
3, 3...
8, 4...
THE FIRST NUMBER...
...WAS 3?

WELL, THIS THING WON'T START UP AGAIN NOW.
THEY'LL CALL TECH SUPPORT...
BUT IT'LL TAKE A WHILE FOR THEM TO FIGURE OUT THAT THE INSIDES HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT.
OKAY.
NOW BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS..
2, 2, 7, 3.
OKAY.
FOR NOW, WE HAVE TO CALL KAI.
HE CAN GET THE DATA OFF THIS STORAGE DEVICE.
ぎゅっ
SQUEEZE
ANYWAY...

LET'S HURRY UP AND GET OUT OF HERE
WE'LL WAIT FOR KAI AT SOME SHOP SOMEWHERE.
O...
OKAY.

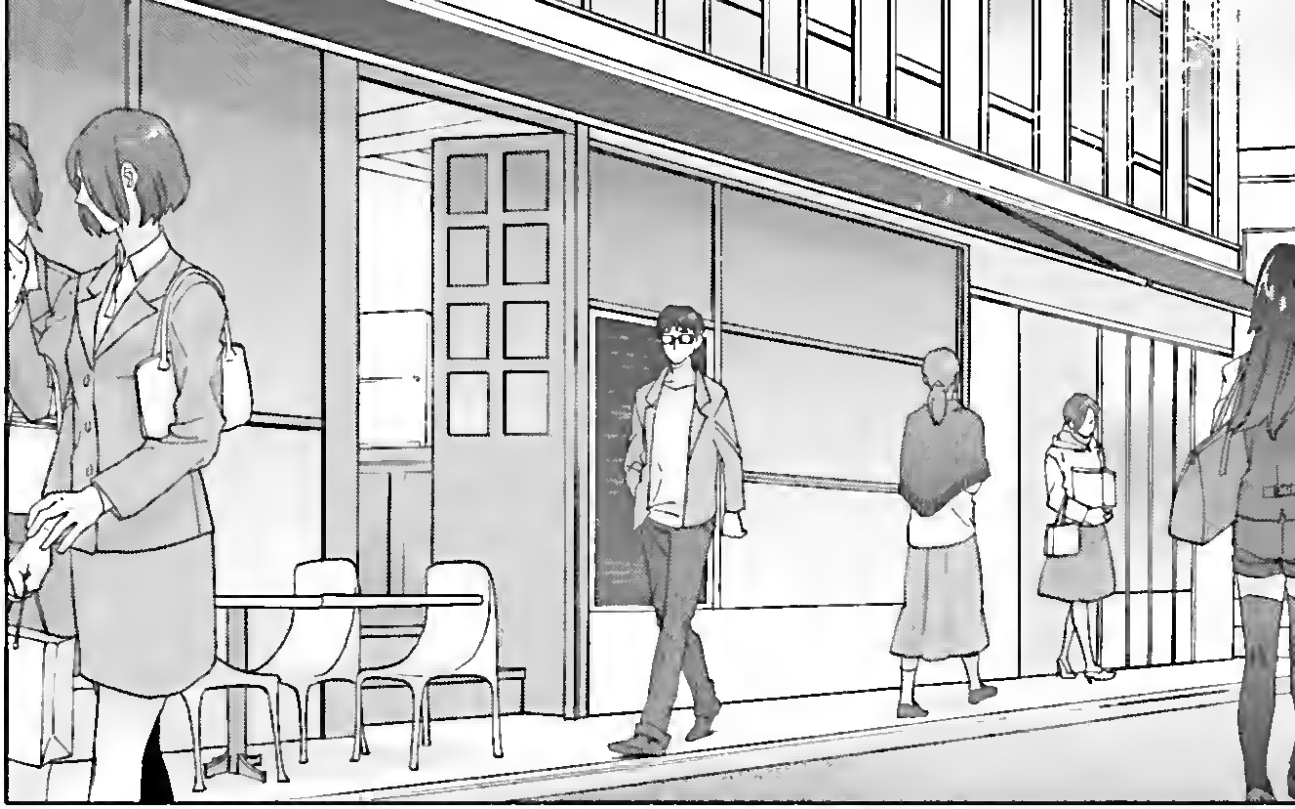
HEY, LEN?
CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?
WHAT IS IT?
7
3
3
8
4
DID THE COMBI-NATION FOR THAT LOCK..
..REALLY MATCH UP TO THE YEAR HE WAS BORN..?
IT SAID DEMOSTHENES WAS BORN AROUND 384, BUT...
..THE COMBINATION WAS 3, 3, 8, 4.
WHY WAS THE FIRST NUMBER 3?
IT MEANS...
MINUS 384.


THE FIRST NUMBER BEING 3 IS THE 3 FOR TRI-ANGLE.
A TRIAN-GLE...
THE SHAPE CAN ALSO STAND FOR MINUS.
SO 384 B.C.E. BECOMES 3, 3, 8, 4.
3 3 8 4
△ 3 8 4


THE CORRECT SETTING
-1
4 8 3 3
3 7 2 2
HOW IT WAS AT THE START
THE DEFAULT SETTING WAS 2, 2, 7, 3...
...AND IT WAS ONLY ONE NUMBER AWAY FROM THE RIGHT ANSWER, 3, 3, 8, 4.
SO HE JUST TURNED THE LOCK ONE OVER, MAKING IT EASY TO REMEMBER.
THE PERSON WHO LOCKED THE PAD-LOCK...
..PROBABLY DIDN'T THINK HE COULD REMEMBER THE NUMBER.
I SEE...
SO I KNEW 384 WAS A GREAT IDEA.

LEN...
...IS SO AMAZING.
NOW I KNOW WHY KAI'S PUT SO MUCH FAITH INTO HIM.
HE COOLY GETS TO THE TRUE ANSWER.
HATSUNE...
3
3
8
4
EVEN IN A SITUATION WHERE HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...
...HE STAYS SO CALM.
...I FIGURED IT OUT BECAUSE OF THE HINT YOU GAVE ME FROM YOUR SEARCH.

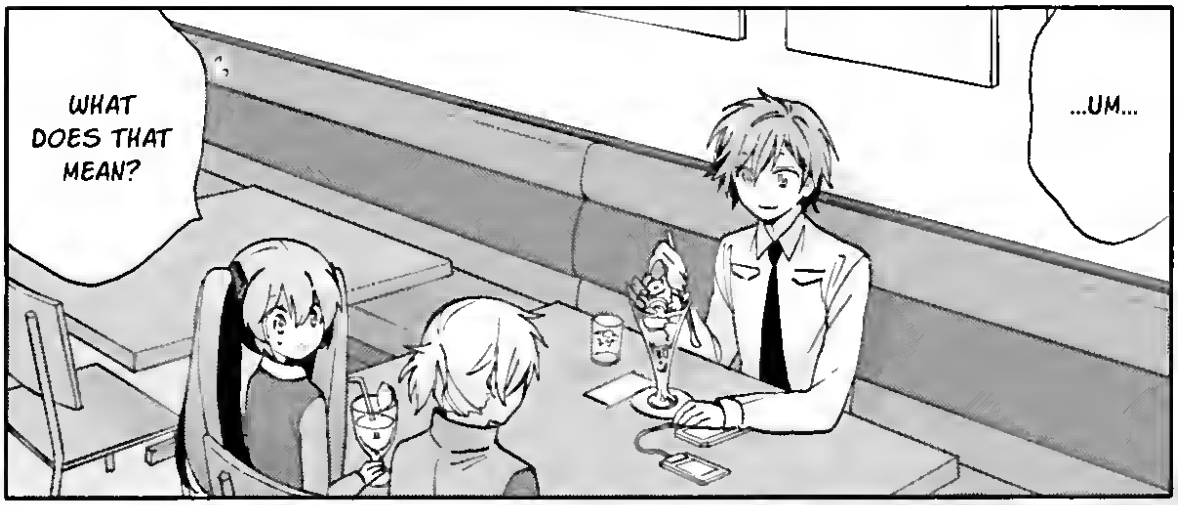
...I SEE.
THIS HAS BEEN A REALLY NICE TIME.
I'M HAPPY BECAUSE I'M PERFORMING MY DUTY...
...BUT ALSO...
...SOMEHOW JUST BEING ABLE TO SPEND TIME WITH LEN LIKE THIS...
...IS MAKING ME HAPPY.



THIS IS IT.
THERE'S NO QUES-TION.

THAT GROUP IS DEMOSTHENES.
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW?
LEN?

IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF ODDS.
AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT FIFTY-FIFTY...
..BUT THEN I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I WOULD DO IF I WERE AN UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENT.
THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED THAT THE PROBABILITY OF SHINJITSU BROADCASTING BEING DEMOSTHENES WENT UP SLIGHTLY.



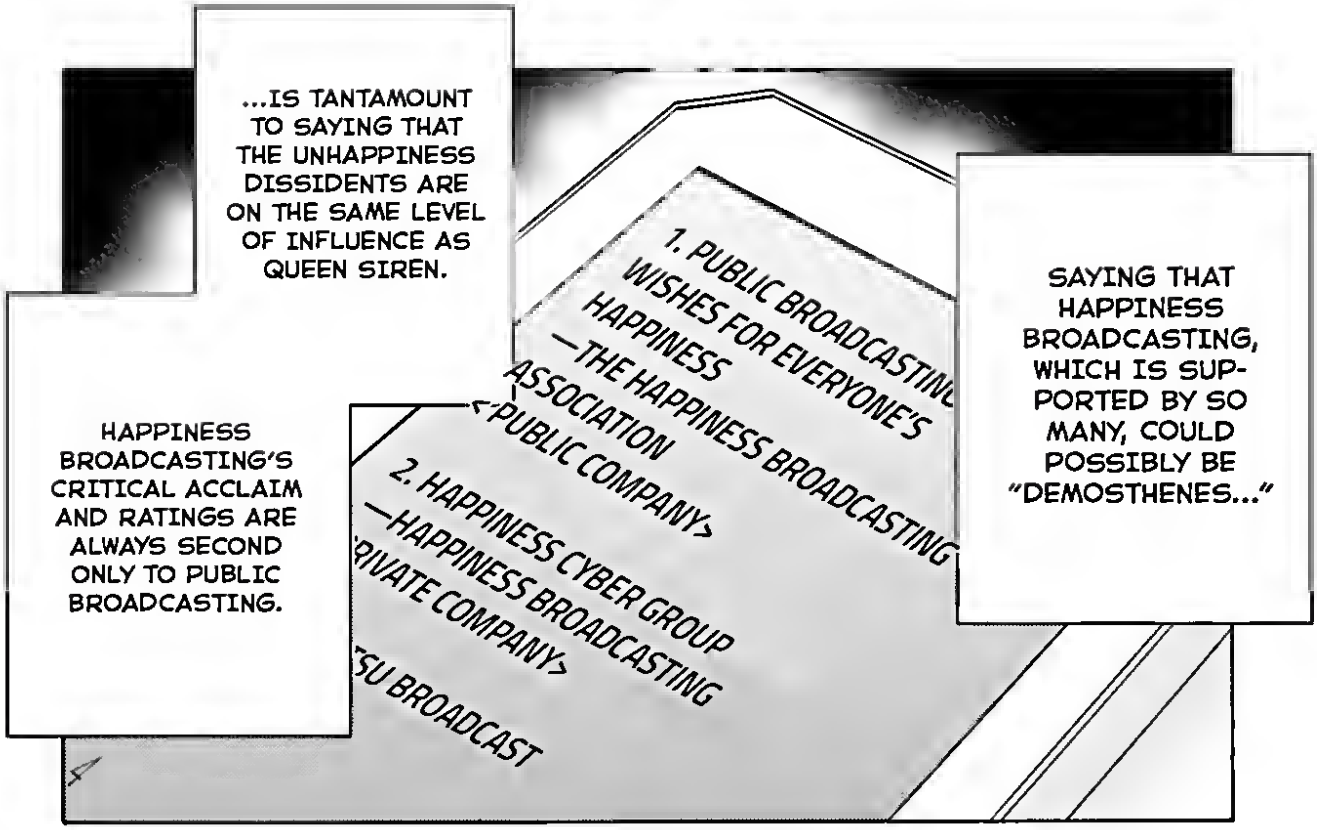
HOWEVER...

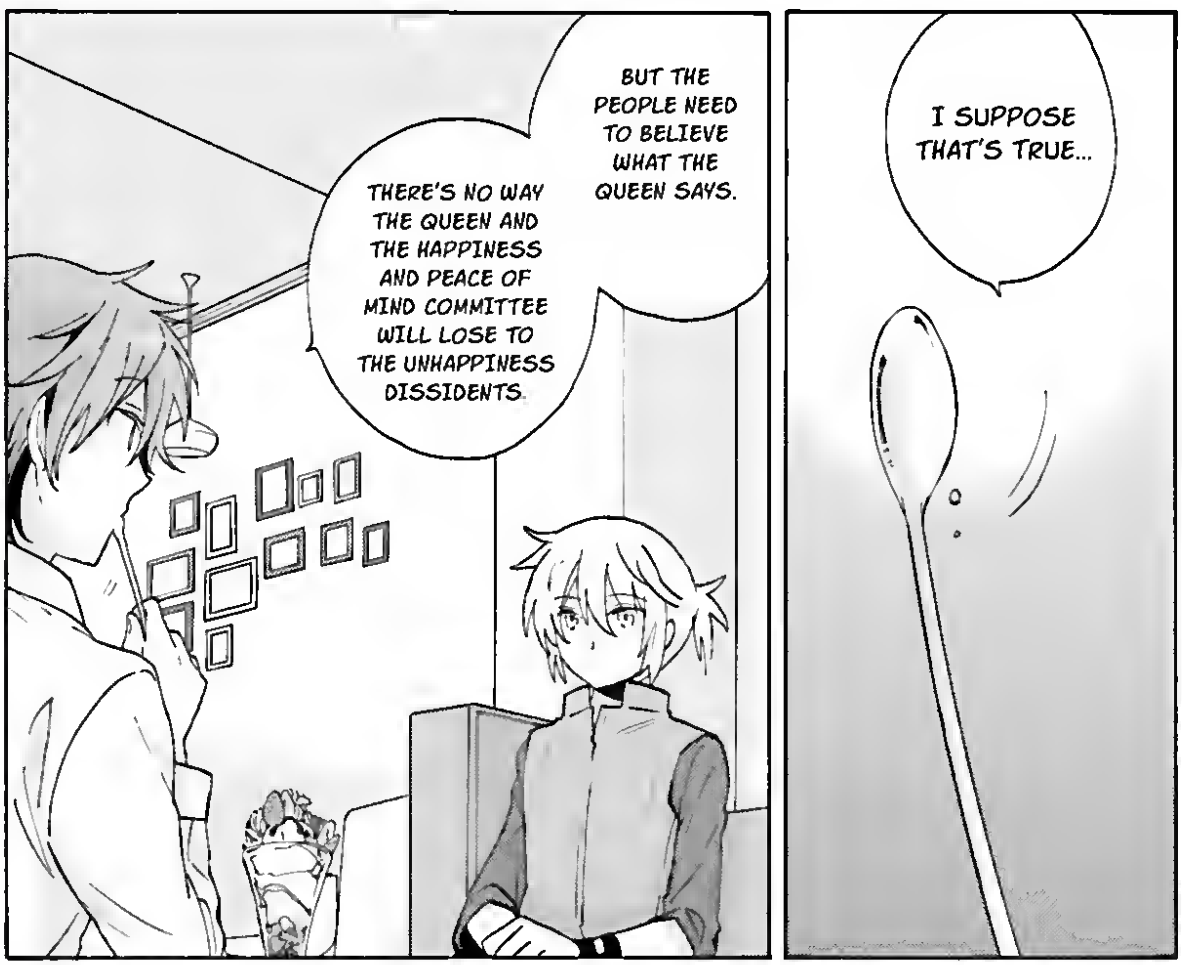
IT REACHES THE MOST PEOPLE, AND AN UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENT WOULD CONSIDER IT THE BEST PLACE TO REACH THE MOST PEOPLE WITH MANIPULATED INFORMATION.

HAPPINESS BROADCASTING

...AND THAT'S A COMPANY THAT MANY CITIZENS BELIEVE IN, AND THAT THEY THINK TELLS THE TRUTH.

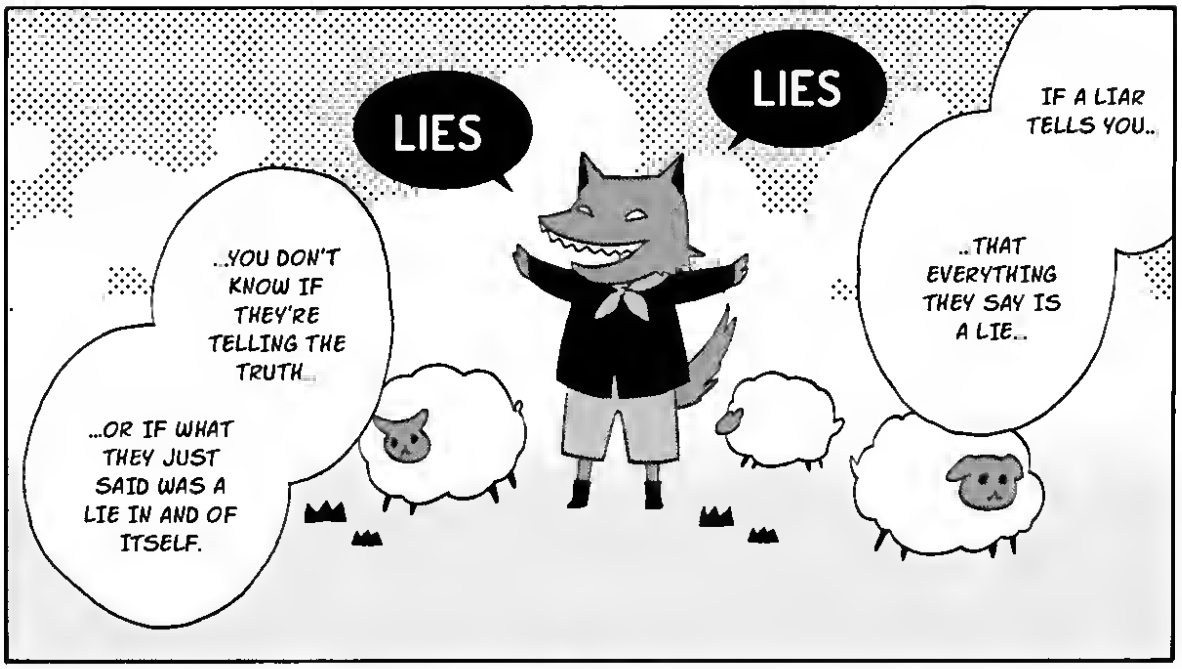
EVERYONE THOUGHT OF HAPPINESS BROADCASTING AS THE MOST SUSPICIOUS...


...IS TANTAMOUNT TO SAYING THAT THE UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENTS ARE ON THE SAME LEVEL OF INFLUENCE AS QUEEN SIREN.
HAPPINESS BROADCASTING'S CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND RATINGS ARE ALWAYS SECOND ONLY TO PUBLIC BROADCASTING.
1. PUBLIC BROADCASTING
WISHES FOR EVERYONE'S HAPPINESS
—THE HAPPINESS BROADCASTING ASSOCIATION
<PUBLIC COMPANY>
2. HAPPINESS CYBER GROUP
—HAPPINESS BROADCASTING
<PRIVATE COMPANY>
SU BROADCAST
SAYING THAT HAPPINESS BROADCASTING, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY SO MANY, COULD POSSIBLY BE "DEMOSTHENES..."

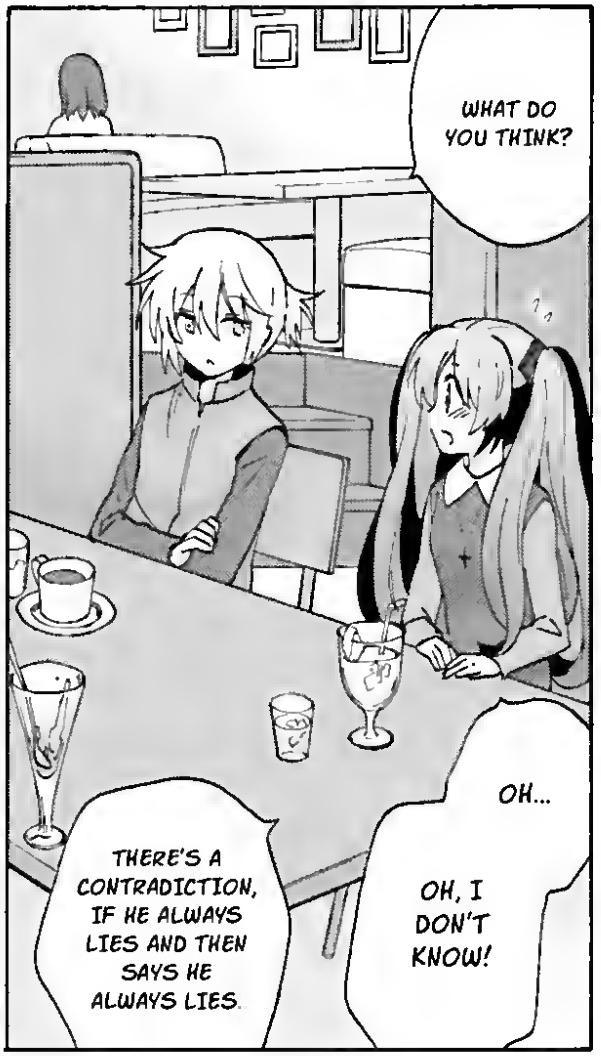

THERE'S NO WAY THE QUEEN AND THE HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND COMMITTEE WILL LOSE TO THE UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENTS.
BUT THE PEOPLE NEED TO BELIEVE WHAT THE QUEEN SAYS.
I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE...

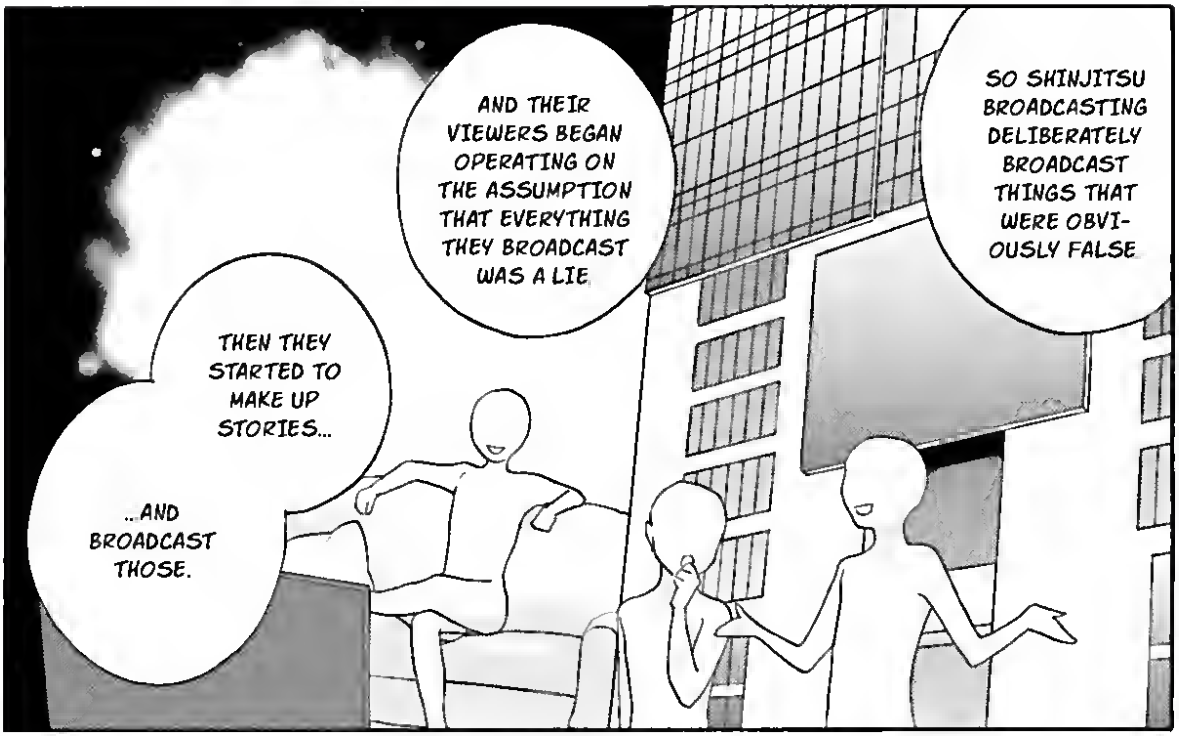
..IF PEOPLE WERE TO SOME-HOW STOP BELIEVING..
..IN THE QUEEN..
BUT JUST FOR INSTANCE..
..IF SHE WERE TO LOSE THE BATTLE OF INFORMATION..
THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD POSSIBLY BE CONTROLLED BY UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENTS.
..HAS BUILT UP OVER THESE YEARS WOULD ALSO BE COMPLETELY DESTROYED.
...THE TRUST THAT HAPPINESS BROADCAST-ING..
AND WE OF THE HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND COMMITTEE..
..WILL ABSOLUTELY TRIUMPH OVER THE UNHAPPINESS DISSIDENTS.
TRUE.
THE QUEEN IS ABSOLUTE.

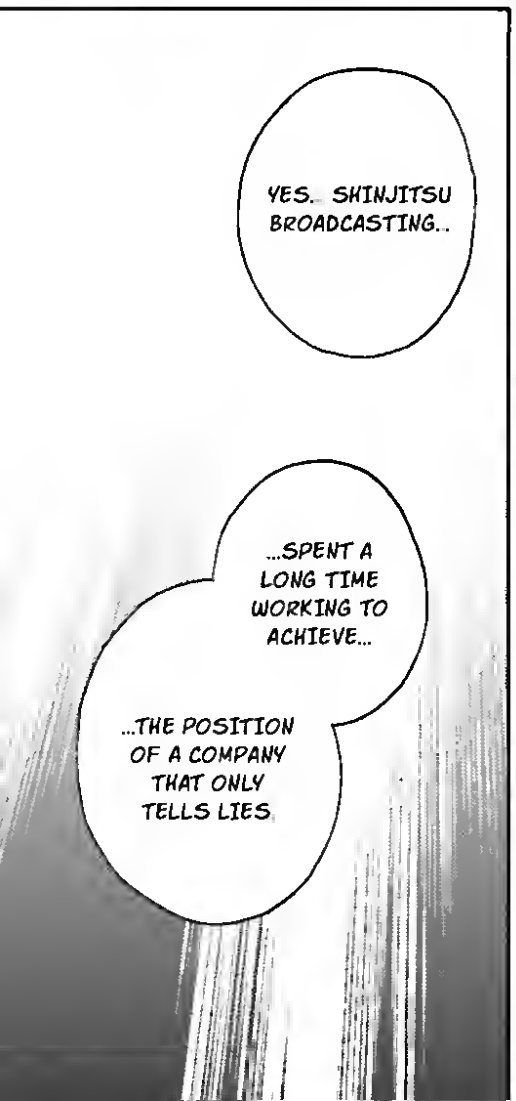
HUH?
BUT IF THEIR VIEWERS DON'T TRUST THEM, THEN...
...ISN'T IT BAD FOR THEM, IF THEY WANT TO MANIPULATE INFORMATION...?
SO, THINKING ABOUT THAT...
...SHINJITSU BROADCASTING, WHOM NONE OF THE CITIZENS TRUST...
...BECOMES THE MOST SUSPICIOUS.
SHINJITSU BROADCASTING
YES.
MOST CITIZENS BELIEVE THAT SHINJITSU BROADCASTING SHOWS NOTHING BUT LIES.
BUT THAT IS ESSENTIALLY...
...THE SAME AS MAKING PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THEY ONLY TELL THE TRUTH.
HUH?
WAIT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


LIES
LIES
IF A LIAR TELLS YOU..
..THAT EVERYTHING THEY SAY IS A LIE..
..YOU DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE TELLING THE TRUTH..
...OR IF WHAT THEY JUST SAID WAS A LIE IN AND OF ITSELF.

THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT IN ORDER TO MAKE THAT CONTRADICTION SEEM TO RECONCILE ITSELF..
...THE HAPPINESS DISSIDENTS START SAYING..
..THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THE CLAIMS THEY'D LIKE TO MAKE.


WHAT DO YOU THINK?
OH...
OH, I DON'T KNOW!
THERE'S A CONTRADICTION, IF HE ALWAYS LIES AND THEN SAYS HE ALWAYS LIES.


SO SHINJITSU BROADCASTING DELIBERATELY BROADCAST THINGS THAT WERE OBVI-OUSLY FALSE
AND THEIR VIEWERS BEGAN OPERATING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT EVERYTHING THEY BROADCAST WAS A LIE
THEN THEY STARTED TO MAKE UP STORIES...
..AND BROADCAST THOSE.


YES. SHINJITSU BROADCASTING..
...SPENT A LONG TIME WORKING TO ACHIEVE...
...THE POSITION OF A COMPANY THAT ONLY TELLS LIES

D...
DO YOU MEAN LIKE..
"EGGS ARE SQUARE" AND "CROWS ARE WHITE"...
..THEY KEPT BROADCAST-ING STUFF LIKE THAT?
UNTIL NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY BELIEVE ANYTHING THAT SHINJITSU BROADCASTING REPORTED...?

TRUTH
LIE.
TRUTH
LIE.
...EVEN THE TRUTHS THAT SHINJITSU BROADCASTING SENDS OUT...
...ARE PERCIEVED AS LIES BY THE AUDIENCE.
AND WHEN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT WHAT THEY HEAR IS ALL LIES...
LIE.
TRUTH
AND THEY MANAGE TO SOMEHOW TURN TRUTH INTO LIES.
THAT IS HOW THEY ACT AS UNHAPPI-NESS DIS-SIDENTS.
...But isn't that just one of those dumb news stations?
Don't they just broadcast ridiculous lies all the time?
SHINJITSU BROADCASTING
シンジツ・ブロードキャスティング
OH...!
DON'T YOU AGREE...
KAI?

AMAZING JOB, LEN!
I'M GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU AS AN INTERN MEMBER OF THE HAPPINESS COMMITTEE.
Pat
Pat
I KNEW IT.
THIS IS JUST WHAT I EXPECTED OF YOU!
HAPPINESS...

ALL RIGHT.
I'M OFF TO MAKE PREPARATIONS.
SEE YOU LATER!

IF I REPORT WHAT YOU DID IN THIS CASE TO THEM, THEY'LL ABSOLUTELY TAKE YOU.
YOU'LL GET CONTRACTED.

PAP
...AH.
LEN...
...LOOK'S HAPPY.
GOOD.
BUT...

I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING BAD IS GOING TO HAPPEN IF HE DOES.
LEN'S GOING TO BE ACCEPTED AS A MEMBER OF THE HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND COMMITTEE SOON...
WHAT DO I DO?
AND THEN...
...SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN.

I'LL PAIR UP..
...WITH ANYONE USEFUL TO GET AN INVESTIGATION DONE.
はっ GASP

BUT YOU DID WELL TO REMEMBER THE PASSWORD TO THE DOOR.
YOU HAVE..
...PRETTY GOOD POWERS OF MEMORY.
O...
OH...
I JUST...
BUT YOU BROKE OUT INTO TOO MUCH OF A COLD SWEAT.
YOUR ANXIETY CAME OUT ON YOUR FACE.
IT WAS JUST LUCK THAT KEPT US FROM BEING FOUND OUT IN THE END.
I WON'T DEPEND ON YOU FOR THAT KIND OF THING NEXT TIME.
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
I...
I'M SORRY.
AND YET...

I THINK BETTER OF YOU.
YOUR CUTENESS...
...WAS VERY USEFUL.
WHAT...
...DID HE SAY?
HIM THINKING BETTER OF ME...
...DOES THAT MEAN THAT BEFORE HE THOUGHT I WAS TOTALLY USELESS?
HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT I WASN'T CALM ENOUGH WHILE WE WERE OUT.
BUT...
STILL...

HE SAID I WAS...
...CUTE, AGAIN.
I'M REALLY HAPPY.
OH MY GOSH!
I'M HAPPY.
IT'S LIKE A DREAM.
AHH... IT BEGINS.

ONDINE...
THE QUEEN'S HAPPINESS AND PEACE OF MIND TIME IS STARTING!
THE CREATURE THAT ONLY I CAN HEAR AND SEE...
It's starting!
YOU'RE NOT JUST SOMETHING MY MIND MADE UP, ARE YOU?
ARE YOU REALLY REAL?
...MY FEELINGS FOR LEN ALSO ACTUALLY REAL?
AND ARE...
--

DEMOSTHENES' IDENTITY IS REVEALED. AND NOW, THE QUEEN'S EXECUTION TIME BEGINS!